

In the Specification:

Kindly make the following amendments to the specification:

Page 1, before numbered line 5, insert:

--This application claims the benefit of Japanese Application No. 2003-411674 filed December 10, 2003, Japanese Application No. 2004-259715 filed September 7, 2004 and PCT/JP2004/017076 filed November 17, 2004, which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.--

Please replace the paragraphs beginning at page 3, numbered line 22 and ending at page 7, line 4, with the following rewritten paragraphs:

(1) A method for producing wash-free rice which does not require washing before cooking, comprising steps of: preparing polished rice from brown rice polished by a built-in rice polishing machine and sifted by a built-in sifting machine and/or polished rice from outside sources; preparing rice polishing bran (parched bran) used as an abrasive; preparing a mixture consisting of the polished rice and the abrasive in a desired ratio; stirring the mixture in a tank by revolving stirring blades such that the polished rice and the abrasive are mutually rubbed in order to strip sticking bran including skin bran and foreign debris from the surfaces of rice grains; sifting the stirred mixture in order to separate bran from the rice grains; separating residual sticking bran and foreign debris from the sifted rice grains in order to obtain finished wash-free rice; and recovering the separated bran for recycling the bran as the abrasive.

~~(2)~~ The method according to (1), wherein: in the stirring step, a revolving rate of the stirring blades is raised, if a surface level of the mixture in the tank is lower than a predetermined level either 1) at the end of the wash-free rice producing operation or 2) the mixture is not filled to capacity of the tank.

~~(3)~~ (2) The method according to (1), wherein: the sifting step is carried out in a tilted cylindrical sifting machine of which contour is formed by a mesh net such that the bran is separated from rice grains as the mixture being flowed downward by revolving the tilted cylindrical sifting machine.

~~(4)~~ (3) The method according to (1), wherein: the separating step is a step for separating foreign debris such as fine powders and the like sticking to the surface of the sifted rice grains, and the separating step is carried out by a one or more finishing units, each of the finishing unit comprising: a supply guide means for supplying rice grains uniformly; a cylindrical rotary brushing means for brushing the surfaces of the rice grains; a regulating means for smoothing a layer of supplied rice grains and regulating a holdup of the supplied rice grains, and a combing wedge for cleaning brushes of the cylindrical rotary brushing means, wherein: the rice grains are supplied uniformly in a reverse direction to a revolving direction of the cylindrical rotary brushing means as regulating the holdup and a retention time of the rice grains so that the rice grains are rubbed by the cylindrical rotary brushing means in order to strip

foreign debris such as fine powders and the like sticking to the surfaces of the rice grains; finished rice grains are taken out as wash-free rice; and the separated foreign debris such as fine powders and the like are sucked and discharged by a solid-gas separating means.

(5) (4) The method according to any one of ~~(1), (3) and (4)~~ (1) to (3), wherein: ionized air from an ion generating apparatus is supplied to the sifting step and the separating step in order to eliminate static electricity so that the foreign debris such as fine powders and the like are prevented from sticking to the finished rice grains again.

(6) (5) An apparatus for producing wash-free rice which does not require washing before cooking, comprising: a polished rice tank for accommodating polished rice from brown rice polished by a built-in raw rice polishing machine and sifted by a built-in sifting machine or polished rice from outside sources; a stirring means for mixing a mixture consisting of the polished rice and an abrasive in a desired ratio by revolving stirring blades; a transportation means for transporting the stirred mixture consisting of policed rice and bran; a sifting means for sifting bran from the polished rice; a separating means comprising cylindrical rotary brushing means for stripping residual foreign powders such as fine powders and the like from the surfaces of rice grains in order to obtain finished wash-free rice grains; and a separated bran recovering means for recycling the bran as the abrasive.

(7) ~~The apparatus according to (6),~~ wherein: the stirring means comprises: a vertical revolving axis equipped in a vertical rotary housing: a plurality of revolving blades arranged radially around the vertical revolving in a plurality of stages; a shut-off valve arranged at the bottom of the vertical rotary housing; and a control means for controlling a revolving rate of the revolving blades in accordance with a level of the mixture in the vertical rotary housing and for controlling a supply amount of the stirred mixture to the next step.

(8) (6) The apparatus according to ~~(6)~~ (5), wherein: the sifting means is a tilted cylindrical sifting machine of which contour is formed by a meshed net; and one or more series of guides made of a plurality of baffle plates are arranged obliquely inside of the tilted cylindrical sifting machine so as to sift the mixture as being revolved and moved downward for separating the bran from the rice grains.

(9) (7) The apparatus according to ~~(6)~~ (5), wherein: the separating means is a means for separating foreign debris such as fine powders and the like sticking to the surface of the sifted rice grains, and the separating means is constituted by one or more separating units, each of the separating units comprising: a supply guide means for supplying rice grains uniformly; a cylindrical rotary brushing means for brushing the surfaces of the rice grains; a regulating means for smoothing a layer of supplied rice grains and regulating a holdup of the supplied rice grains; and a combing wedge for cleaning brushes of the

cylindrical rotary brushing means, wherein: foreign debris such as fine powders and the like are separated from rice grains; and the separated foreign debris such as fine powders and the like are sucked and discharged by a solid-gas separating means.

(10) (8) The apparatus according to (9) (7), wherein: the separating unit further comprises: a downwardly tilted supply guide means constituted by a base plate and parting plates widening toward the end arranged on the base plate; a cylindrical rotary brushing means arranged brushes on its cylindrical body below the end of the supply guide means, wherein, the brushes are revolved so as to lift falling rice grains; a regulating means for smoothing a layer of the supplied rice grains and for regulating a holdup of the supplied rice grains by varying a gap between the cylindrical revolving brushing means as regulating a tilting angle of the regulating means in accordance with supplied amount of rice grains; and a combing wedge which always cleans the brushes of said cylindrical rotary brushing means.

(11) (9) The apparatus according to (9) (7), wherein: the separating unit comprises: a supply guide means; a supply guide aiding means; a cylindrical rotary brushing means; and a combing wedge; wherein: the supply guide means and supply guide aiding means, each constituted by a permeable net with a sifting structure, are arranged at a predetermined slanting angle; a gap formed between the end of the supply guide means and the end of the cylindrical rotary brushing means is maintained such that falling rice grains are lifted by the revolving brushes of the

cylindrical rotary brushing means; the coming wedge always cleans the brushes of said cylindrical revolving brushing means; and all components are designed beforehand in order to fit the all components in predetermined position easily.

~~(12)~~ (10) The apparatus according to any one of ~~(6), (8) and (9)~~ (5) to (7), wherein: a static electricity eliminating means is connected to the sifting means and separating means; and the static electricity eliminating means comprises an ionized air generating apparatus and an ionized air transporting means.